



NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

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NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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Introduction

Northchurch Parish Council (NPC) is committed to providing high quality services to residents of the parish.

But in any organisation things can sometimes go wrong. When people contact us to say we have not provided a satisfactory service or have fallen below our high standards, we treat this as a complaint.

We take complaints very seriously, try to put things right and make sure we do not make the same mistake again.

This complaints procedure sets out how we will handle any complaint you make to us and helps ensure that the Council:

- deals with complaints promptly, efficiently and courteously
- treats complaints confidentially and fairly
- keeps those who have a complaint informed of the progress and outcome of their complaints.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided by the Council or its staff.

The Complaints Procedure does not normally apply:

- to initial reports to the Council about problems or defects with services provided by the Council. But if you are not satisfied with the response you can use the Complaints procedure.
- for appeals against Council decisions which were properly taken
- to complaints against Councillors, where other procedures apply.

The following procedure is intended to cover those situations where things have gone wrong. It exists to check that everything is done properly and that correct procedures and policies were followed.

Who can make a complaint?

A complaint can be made by anyone, either in person or on behalf of someone who is unable to make the complaint themselves. A friend or relative can act on your behalf if you wish.

How can I make a complaint?

Stage 1: Informal, verbal complaint

If you would like to speak to a Councillor or the Clerk about your complaint you can call the number as detailed above.

In the first instance the Clerk will try and help resolve your complaint or if you prefer to speak to a Councillor the Clerk will arrange this.

Stage 2: Formal, written complaint

If you are either dissatisfied by the outcome of Stage 1, or you want to make a formal complaint in writing, you are asked to email the Clerk at the email address above.

- a) If you prefer not to put the complaint to the Clerk, you shall be advised to put it to the Chairman. On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chairman, whomever has received the written complaint, will respond to you confirming receipt and the next stage in the Complaints procedure
- b) On receipt of a written complaint the Clerk or Chairman, as the case may be, shall (except where the complaint is about his or her own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with you but shall not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Clerk or a Councillor without first notifying the person complained of and giving an opportunity for comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint.
- c) Where the Clerk or Chairman receives a written complaint about his or her own actions, he or she shall forthwith refer the complaint to the Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee. The F&GP committee shall endeavour to settle the complaint with you.
- d) The Clerk or Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Full Council (Council) any written complaint resolved directly with you.

Stage 3: Unresolved written complaint

If despite best endeavours, the Clerk, Chair or F&GP Committee are unable to settle the complaint with you, the written complaint will be taken to the next meeting of the Council and the Clerk shall notify you of the date on which the complaint will be considered, and you will be offered an opportunity to explain your complaint at the meeting.

The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the matter to be discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.

Within 7 working days of the decision being made, it and the nature of any action to be taken, shall be communicated in writing to you.

Where the Council requires advice on law or practice, the decision shall be deferred until the next meeting after advice has been received.

The Council will consider any lessons learned from your complaint and will, wherever possible and appropriate, consider ways of ensuring the circumstances causing the complaint are fully addressed so as not to reduce the risk of them occurring again.

Complaints against Councillors

All councillors sign up to a Code of Conduct that says they must treat people equally and with respect and act honestly.

If a complaint is made against a councillor, it will be referred to Dacorum Borough Council's Standards Committee, who consider and deal with breaches of the Code by a councillor.

Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer, Dacorum Borough Council. The Borough Council only accept written complaints, but you can do this by following this [link](#).